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ABSTRACT

The success of the Minimbah Aboriginal Preschool in Armidale, New South Wales (Australia) is due largely to the leadership abilities of its Aboriginal director, Dianne Roberts. Much of her leadership success comes from knowing her communities and her place in them. From an Aboriginal perspective, there is much more to knowing a community than a non-Aboriginal person would suspect. Kin knowledge is far more complex than a family tree and contains many intricate details of human relationships. Knowledge of kin relationships is necessary for understanding how local social networks operate and is a source of authority. Roberts is related to many local Aboriginal people, and she insists that detailed local knowledge of the community is needed for successful leadership at the local level. However, she does not settle for being labeled an "insider" or an "outsider." Instead, she switches from one to the other depending on which community she is dealing with. She also is a member of the educational community and maintains connections with town councils, educational associations, and various government bodies. Her authority in the professional community derives from her formal education qualifications; her ability to code switch from Aboriginal English to standard English; and the fact that she is an "authentic" Aboriginal, meaning that she was not removed from her family as were may Aboriginal children of the 1950s "stolen generation." In an interview, Roberts reflects on the universality of Indigeneity and how she has been influenced by Indigenous people in New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. (Contains 25 references.) (TD)

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Acting Globally by Thinking Locally

Kerith Power
and
Dianne Roberts

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Acting globally by thinking locally- a Postcolonial Partnership

Kerith Power, University of New England, NSW, Australia, and Dianne Roberts,
Principal and Director, Minimbah Preschool and
Primary School, Armidale NSW, Australia .

ABSTRACT:

In this joint presentation Dianne Roberts reflects on the influence of global notions of Indigeneity on her success in transgressing hierarchical leadership in an Aboriginal preschool. By her intimate knowledge of her local community and successful reading of
postcolonial conditions, Dianne has developed productive partnerships with white institutions and formed leadership strategies which not only take ideas from international Indigenous education but which offer a model of success locally. Kerith Power, an Early Childhood academic at UNE, collaborates with Dianne's practice and explores notions of 'travelling theory' (Said, 1997) and issues around the shifting power relations and emergent global Indigenous identities that are a feature of postcolonial Australia (McConaghy, 1998).

Since 1996 Minimbah Aboriginal Preschool's Director, Dianne Roberts and myself have worked together as co-researchers. I am a 'Friend of Minimbah'; a non-indigenous person with a background of leadership in community-based preschools, one of a wide range of individuals who are attracted to work on Dianne's projects by her broad vision and productive potential. My work with Aboriginal organisations started with shame fifteen years ago when I first heard the Aboriginal history of Australia. I started to offer my skills where I could to become a part of the solution to the outcomes of that history for Aboriginal people today. Shame is not a sustainable long-term motive and I have increasingly shifted towards negotiated equal partnerships where I am learning that the benefits are reciprocal. I have been employed at Minimbah as a relief director and as a project worker writing funding applications, working on accountability systems and as a sounding board for Minimbah's strategic planning. My current level of involvement is based on the requirements for co-researchers outlined by Dianne Roberts in our joint AARE paper in 1998 (Power, K. & Roberts, D,1998). In a trial version of today's paper one of the listeners commented on the 'adulatory tone' of my analysis. My response to this is (a) that I am conducting 'engaged' research as described by Dianne Bell (1999) in relation to her work with the Njarrindjeri people in the Hindmarsh
Island case; (b) My broad research question is to look at the storylines leaders in Indigenous early childhood settings construct about their successes. As a non-Aboriginal co-researcher I do not position myself as a 'knowing' judge or evaluator of success or failure and (c) in the 'Indigenous Education' section of the ACER (1999) Research Highlights a demand has been identified for research 'which identifies successful outcomes' (Frigo, 1999).

I am reading and reflecting towards my Ph.D in the areas of post-modernist, feminist post-structuralist and post-colonial theory. My fieldwork consists of 'deep hanging out' at Minimbah and semi-structured interviews with Dianne and her staff about issues of leadership. I try to discuss and present these findings jointly with Dianne where possible.

The effect of quality leadership on educational outcomes in early childhood is considered by Jorde Boom and Sheerer (1992, p. 580) to be indirect but crucial: ' It is the director who sets the tone and and creates the climate of concern that is the hallmark of a quality program...The director shapes the work environment for the teaching staff who, in turn, provide the critical link to the children. Thus, the director's ability to train and supervise staff who have limited experience or formal education is critical.'

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Dianne has been the Director at Minimbah under Aboriginal community management for twelve years. In 1999, Minimbah has an enrolment of 126 children from Preschool to Grade 2. All of the full-time teaching staff are Aboriginal and have teaching or early childhood qualifications. In the discourses of early childhood education which Dianne and I share, the level of staff training is a well recognised indicator of program quality in early childhood settings. The majority of the staff have been required to complete their qualifications while working at Minimbah. Ancillary staff are also required to engage in professional development. Staff turnover rates at the school are low.

I have described elsewhere (Power 1998a, P.2) how Dianne works with her position of authority inside the preschool. Successful leadership strategies outlined in previous presentations (Power and Roberts, 1998, 1999) include Dianne's refusal of binaries, refusal to 'take sides' in the Aboriginal, the educational and the larger community; using her local knowledge to employ Aboriginal staff from a range of kin groups, transgression of hierarchical leadership structures and presenting 'mobile and transitory' points of resistance in the shifting power relations of the wider community. Such strategies, I argued, were a good theoretical fit with Foucault's notions of productive power, resistance and subjection (Foucault, 1977, *Discipline and Punish*, cited in McHoul & Grace, 1997, p.194).

In this paper I consider Dianne's success in leadership by analysing ideas of 'knowing the community' (Roberts, 1999, pers.comm, 29/1), knowing one's place in that community/one's place identity, knowing one's authentic self, the legitimating conditions or sources of authority, 'choosing the margin' (hooks, b, 1990) and intersections of language and power. These ideas I characterise as post-structuralist, feminist and post-colonial and I have found that these frameworks work for me in locating Dianne's storylines of her leadership. Dianne, of course makes her own meanings in her own frameworks and does not necessarily share mine.

To set a context: I have discussed in detail elsewhere (Power, 1982) the links preschools need to make with the community in a NSW country town. It is important to note that these are not foregrounded in today's discussion. Preschool education, as women's and children's business, is already marginalised in mainstream education but this discussion is confined to my attempt to weigh what is added by Aboriginality. In this Aboriginal managed and led education site, because of its marginal position [in both a geographic and social sense], there are fluid, complex and shifting 'seismic forces': discursive practices of race, both in and around the school. Three examples- Infighting between kin groups is a common issue in Aboriginal organisations. In a workplace dispute in an Aboriginal preschool, loyalty to family (Aboriginal law) could sideline institutional policies and procedures, which depend on mainstream law.(Sennett, R, 1993). Minimbah applies hybrid solutions to such problems. Financial accountability procedures for Aboriginal organisations are stringent and take up large amounts of work time for which someone has to be paid. There is confusion and contestation around separate Aboriginal education versus mainstreaming in the Aboriginal communities, in the local education communities (Armidale is known as an 'education town') and in broader communities, including funding bodies on which Minimbah depends for its financial life.

I will now examine how Dianne's success is related to knowing her communities and knowing her place in them. My intention, ' in opening up issues I can only begin to understand' is to place this discussion in a global discourse of indigeneity and with Clifford, 'simply to make visible to outsiders the complexity that is hidden behind words such as "local", "tribal" and "community". For it is too easy to speak about "local history", "the tribe" or the "community" as if these were not differently interpreted and often contested.' (1997 p.144).

I think a division between 'community' and 'place' may be foreign to the way some Aboriginal people construct their identities. When I have asked Aboriginal people where

they come from, family and place have been mentioned in one breath. I make the division in an attempt to comprehend the complexity.

To know the community in Dianne's sense seems to be to know in which sense one is an 'insider' and in which sense an 'outsider'. To be aware how she conceptualises her position is to note that she refuses to accept the binary, to remain fixed in either an 'insider' or 'outsider' category in the various communities in which she moves. Dianne defines her own position in Armidale as both 'outside' and 'inside' the Koori community: In a joint paper with Kathy Watson (1996, p.2) she writes 'Since this was not my country, I needed to get to know the people in the Armidale Koori community'. Later in the same paper she mentions 'the special advantage of being a Koori in a Koori community' A comment from Patsy Cohen exemplifies the effect Dianne's strategies have in engendering ownership and pride in the preschool from members of the Aboriginal community who may not be directly involved: ' Now Dianne Roberts, Director of Minimbah, she's really doin' a good job. She's startin' at that little pre-school age with the kids too, doin' their Aboriginal thing- dances and their story time, tellin' them to be proud of what they are, never be ashamed. She's drumming all this into their heads...'(Franklin, 1995, p.86).

Cohen & Somerville describe as part of women's work : 'kin talk, which maintains the knowledge base on which the networks operate. Knowledge of kin talk depends on membership of the group... (knowledge) far more complex than a family tree and containing many intricate details of human relationships ' (1990, p.141). Kin knowledge is a source of authority. Dianne's insistence that one of the keys to her leadership is to 'know the community' adds weight to the notion of a uniquely Aboriginal interpretation of what this might mean. The genealogical table of the Quinlan Clan (Quinlan, 1990, p. 38) shows relationships in three generations to people with the surnames Lockwood, Cohen, Kelly, Briggs, Widders ,Dixon, Taylor, Green, Hoskin, Ahoy and Moran. These surnames, represent a fair cross-section of the various Aboriginal family groups who claim Armidale as their traditional country. It is apparent that 'place identity' is an integral part of Dianne's sense of self as much as her knowledge of where she fits into the genealogies of her Aboriginal community. Dianne is a Dungutthi woman, who grew up in her own place at Bellbrook and was never subjected to the sense of dislocation suffered by members of 'the stolen generation' (Read, P, 1981).The removal and institutionalisation of Aboriginal children was at its peak in the 1950's , during Dianne's childhood.One in three or four Aboriginal children in NSW were removed from their families (Read, 1999, p.23). Growing up at home with her family intact meant that she knew later in Sydney that her marriage to Frank Roberts, a Bundjalung man, was correct according to traditional law. Dianne was forbidden to marry Gumbainngir or Dungutthi men (from her own and the next door geographical area). She carries this knowledge of obedience to traditional law as an important part of her Aboriginal identity. She says that as a member of a coastal people she is an outsider in Armidale. It is possible from the remnant evidence, without claiming a deep understanding of the specifics of traditional kin group affiliation, to infer that, through Ingelba , a place located between Armidale (on the tableland) and Bellbrook (on the coast), and some of the Ingelba Dungutthi families, Dianne is related through her father to many Armidale Aboriginal people (Quinlan, 1983; Cohen and Somerville, 1990). Through family affiliation alone and through relationships with the partners and children of her nine sisters and three brothers, Dianne 'knows her community' in a specific way . To have an awareness of the convolutions of genealogies, kin networks and their functioning, to 'know the community' in this sense would be almost completely lost on a non-Aboriginal preschool director who hears that rather throw-away line.

One corollary of Dianne's thinking about community is that she claims no easy transferability of her leadership strategies, indeed insists that in each community it is this detailed local knowledge of the interpretations and contestations of community that is needed for successful leadership.

Dianne's knowledge of the non-Indigenous community, which she describes as 'the hierarchical system', extends through memberships of official bodies and personal contacts, to shifts in government accountability requirements, funding priorities, changing rhetorics, the sources of discrimination and opposition. In terms of wider constituted authority Dianne sits on State and Commonwealth boards of Aboriginal education and has influence on policy in these arenas. She is adept at alliances and partnerships which secure her connections and standing in a number of sites. These include, for example, the town council, the independent schools' association, the public, Catholic and TAFE education systems, the University, health, employment and welfare bodies. Her recognition of what constitutes a claim to authority in the wider community is illustrated by her insistence on formal education qualifications for herself and her staff.

Discourses of 'authenticity.'

There are risks in refusing to take sides. Discourses of authenticity surface in Australia, when unpopular ideas are put forward by people who claim to be Aboriginal. They are often dealt with, both in the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community, not on the merit of the ideas, but by questioning the Aboriginality of the person putting them forward. Authenticity is important because of the power it conveys. Dianne both gains strength from a personal identity built on 'authentic' Aboriginality and employs this discourse in 'ethnomimesis'. Clifford (1997, p.200) asks 'Why play the game of self representation? ... "[E]thnomimesis" ...may include empowerment and participation in a wider public sphere as well as commodification in an increasingly hegemonic game of identity'. Dianne avoids a binary reading of community and a practice of oppositional struggle: 'the Aboriginal people are taking from the main stream what it is that they want...yeah..it's a choice, isn't it... yeah, and we're not using up a lot of energies then to say We want to change that mainstream system to fit us. What we're saying is we're taking what we know will fit that pattern. That's the difference..and it's important for us to have that understanding. So there'll be some things that I'll say "No way..in my thinking..there's no way I'll try to fit that structure" ' (Roberts, pers.comm.,090998). Peter Read claims that considerations of authentic Aboriginality in colonial times, including policies of removing so-called 'half-caste' children have been based on political expediency, on a hatred and contempt, the origins of which 'lie deep-rooted in guilt over the invasion,' that 'in the long term, Aborigines were not wanted- anywhere. Their extinction, it seemed, would not occur naturally after all, but would have to be arranged' (1999, p.22). Just to have survived is an act of defiance.Dianne's 'authenticity' as regards place and family and the fact that all of her eleven siblings remained at home, is unusual in New South Wales. Authentic Aboriginality is a source of authority and status in both Dianne's constructions of self and in the constructions of others towards her. As an elder she is respected and has great influence in Aboriginal decision making. In non-Aboriginal arenas, she is empowered to speak through a grudging respect for her authenticity.

A note on language and power.

Dianne is a powerful and persuasive speaker both in Aboriginal and conventional English. In her early childhood,on the Bellbrook reserve under white management, it was forbidden to speak the Dungutthi language. The older people used to whisper it to each other so that the young ones would not learn to speak and be punished. hooks quotes a fellow Afro- American "ours is a broken voice"...and remarks, 'Often when the radical voice speaks about domination we are speaking to those who dominate. Their presence changes the nature and direction of our words. Language is also a place of struggle...Our words are not without meaning, they are an action, a resistance'(1990, p.146). This means that not only are Aboriginal people of Dianne's generation speaking 'in a broken voice' to those who dominate, but also in the dominant language. Dianne's educational aim in relation to language is to teach the children what

remains of their traditional languages as well as her own technique of what she terms 'code-switching' from Aboriginal to standard English (pers.comm 19/10/99), which she has learned 'working for big shots ' (Quinlan, 1983, p. 44) and in the course of her formal education.

Knowing One's Place

Besides the kin networks and non-Aboriginal qualifications and memberships that seem to determine local conditions of whose authority is accepted and whose leadership is supported, there is the question of 'knowing one's place.'

Radhika Mohanram, in Black Body (1999, p.xv) observes 'place is normally perceived as a passive, abstract arena in which events occur. However, place/landscape is saturated with relations of domination which are relevant to the construction of identity. Metaphors which attest to the mutual interrelationship between the identity of the subject and that of place include position, location, situation, centre-margin, liminal space, and dominant-subordinate'.

In the Anglo- Australian community I grew up in 'knowing one's place' was a notion of being aware of and consenting to fixed relations of subservience, a leftover from English class relations. To 'know one's place' in this framework also carried with it the implication of being stuck in that place and not to aspire to move out of it.

The geographical/spatial associations of the phrase 'knowing one's place ' intersecting with class, may be partially captured by the metaphor of 'upstairs, downstairs'. The dehumanising discourses of race positioned Dianne and her sisters 'downstairs ' (Quinlan, 1983, p.44) and, in a colonising culture where male landowners ruled, deprived her brothers of land ownership, Mrs Quinlan, Dianne's mother's story points to a long history of land tenure even in colonial times : 'We used to be really on our own at Bellbrook. My father fenced that place in four times. No one helped him ...We should have got that place, it's only really, like me and my sister and my brother that could claim it; all the others are strays...They never really was always there ' (p.45).

'Knowing one's place' and having been always there, in connection with a physical, identifiable local area seems to be regarded by many indigenous people as a base for the formation of a strong sense of self and personal power. Lilla Watson, an Aboriginal academic, essentialises non-Aboriginal educators as lacking this geographical anchor point : 'tertiary education['s] origins are colonial, and it still remains part of a Western educational empire. It provides employment opportunities and career stepping stones for academics from the U.S, U.K., Canada etc, and markets for their textbooks and journals. That easy interchangeability both indicates and perpetuates a rootlessness, a detachment from this land and responsibility for it ' (1988 , p.6).

In 'Bellbrook: My Father's Country' Dianne's mother described a pattern of seasonal movement by Richard Kelly, her father and Dianne's grandfather, from the tablelands to the coast. She distinguished this movement from 'My people [I read this as meaning her own mother's people as distinct from her father's] ..They roamed around the Macleay, they were free in their own country' (1983, p. 37).

To say Dianne was never subjected to the dislocation of separation from her family and place of origin is not to suggest that her life was easy, but to attempt an explanation of how she seems to have transcended some of the emotional damage of institutionalised racism. Dianne has experienced the full gamut of discrimination on offer from the mainstream.and has responded by carrying on her mother's vision of education as a social leveller, for herself, her staff and for the children she teaches. Although there was no forcible relocation, there was loss of freedom to roam, dispossession and a legacy of fear. Her mother told stories of Dianne's grandfather at 'the time of the killings' and his subsequent loss of legal title to his land after thirty years of farming (Quinlan 1983, pp

37-45). Mrs Quinlan said of her children 'Most of my girls, they went to Sydney, working for big shots ' (Quinlan, 1983, p.44) and this is true of Dianne. Among the many stories of discrimination directly experienced by Dianne and her generation is that of the education she herself received from her grandmother at home in early childhood (called 'Bubba's Knowledge'), her mother's struggle with government bodies to obtain quality primary school teaching for her children, and Dianne's own single year's experience at Kempsey high school. 'All the Aboriginal children were given a diagnostic test and put in the underachieving class. Attending this high school caused culture shock because the other students were horrible, using racist language, and the curriculum was culturally biased...Mum planted the seed and inspired my vision for a "culturally safe" education' (Roberts & Watson 1996, p.1).

I have referred to Minimbah's marginal physical location, on the eastern edge of Armidale, on the site of the 'Mish' (short for 'Mission'). Once 'Silver City', this is where Aboriginal people's corrugated iron homes were located, on the town rubbish Dump, in the days of Aboriginal 'Protection', when official policy was to smooth the supposedly dying pillow of the remaining Aboriginal race. In the assimilation era (thirty years ago) small 'transition' houses, which are still in use today, were built on the site . A quote from a philanthropic white woman in Franklin's local history gives an idea of some of the discourses of race, class and community that ensured that Aboriginal housing remained at the edge of town: 'at that time white people had such a hostility towards Aborigines it would have been a disaster to spread them throughout the town. At least they had a sense of community at the Dump. This is valuable to Aborigines' Halstead in Franklin, 1995). When Dianne Roberts moved to Armidale in the early seventies she lived in a shared house in this marginal area , just as low income young people do today, or, as Dianne herself points out, immigrants with extended family traditions did in the fifties (Roberts, 1999,pers.comm). When one of my colleagues moved to Armidale earlier this year, the estate agent had helpfully marked on the town map for her the areas she should avoid in seeking rental accommodation. East Armidale was one of them

In contrast to non-Indigenous 'rootlessness ' Watson claims for indigenous people an 'unique relationship with the land' (1988, p.7). Clifford (1997, p.252) writes 'Tribal or fourth world assertions of sovereignty and "first-nationhood"...stress continuity of habitation, aboriginality and often a "natural" connection to the land ' and asks (p.36) What are the political stakes in claiming (or sometimes being relegated to) a "home"?'

Mohanram (1999, p.xii) writes 'Not only does a sense of place participate in the construction of a perception of physical identity, it is also central to the formation of a racial identity. The category of 'black body' can only come into being when the body is perceived as being out of place, either from its natural environment or its natural boundaries.' Lilla Watson (1988, p.9) points out that ' For the greater part of our history...we [Australian Aboriginal people] felt no need to make any explicit definition of ourselves ...Since colonisation ...we have had to clarify and confirm our identit[ies] for ourselves '. Dianne attributes to her family and place connections her positive sense of being grounded despite colonising practices, but does not feel the need to theorise lack in non-indigenous people and processes.

Her performance of indigeneity includes an insistence on being central to the mainstream community. That is one reason for her monthly appearance at the community markets in the Armidale Mall: 'This is my way of saying I belong in this community' (Roberts, 1999, pers.comm.). bell hooks, in 'Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness' points out the potential for 're-vision' involved in 'oppositional political struggle. Such diverse pleasures can be experienced, enjoyed even, because one transgresses, moves "out of one's place." For many of us, that movement requires pushing against oppressive boundaries set by race, sex and class domination. Initially, then, it is a defiant political gesture. Moving, we confront the realities of choice and location' (1990, p.146).Dianne's gesture of belonging both

partakes and differs from that of a diasporic African- American, whose displacement from Africa is total and irrevocable. I believe that Dianne's choice, to trangress, to move "out of one's place" fully partakes of the magnitude of pain detailed by hooks in speaking about issues of "space and location" (1990, p.147). The difference is that Dianne is not moving out of her place at all, except in the eyes of colonisers. It is conceivable that if colonisation had never happened Dianne or someone related to her may still be sitting in roughly the same place. The difference is Indigeneity, always having been there. Therefore Dianne's performance unlike hooks', not only chooses the margin but also claims the centre.

Does localism necessarily imply parochialism? In what Lloyd (1999) calls the 'Ultra-Modernist Narrative', to be focused on the local implies a sense of missing out on the universal truths that can only be developed by having a 'global' perspective, being aware of the 'big picture' and having a basis of comparison with other places and other cultures. What is often opposed to this narrative is what Mohanram (1999, p) calls 'the identity of the black body and its natural relation to nature and the landscape as opposed to that of the white body and its relationship to knowledge.' I propose that a notion of 'translocalism' may fit better with what is the case. '[T]heories travel just like people' writes Mohanram, and 'traces of place [remain] in theoretical concepts ...when they move from one place to another.' An auiotaped interview with Dianne Roberts illustrates how this seems to have happened and also seems to support the argument put forward by Clifford (1999, p.24): 'once the representational challenge is seen to be the protrayal and understanding of local/global historical encounters, co-productions, dominations, and resistances, one needs to focus on hybrid, cosmopolitan experiences as much as rooted, native ones.'

In this presentation I have attempted to draw out the sources of authority which support Dianne Roberts' educational and community leadership in terms of knowing the community and knowing one's place in it, and have signalled that discourses of 'authentic' Aboriginality that essentialise 'natural' connections to land, combined with hybrid practices of self-representation, play an important part in securing support and resources for an indigenous organisation and in furthering its educational purposes. Dianne's presentation will draw on the global spread of Indigenous ideas.

* At 85 Trelawney Rd, Armidale.

* 7 June 1999; Preparation for AARE conference joint presentation

* Open-ended interview re Global Indigenous notions of education used at Minimbah: interviewer Kerith Power.

* Dianne Roberts, Director and Principal, Minimbah Aboriginal Preschool and Primary School.

*Q.1: I'LL JUST ASK YOU ABOUT ANY OF THE IDEAS YOU GOT FROM OVERSEAS, LIKE I THOUGHT THE IDEA OF A
CULTURAL NEST.

DIANNE: In New Zealand.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU FIRST HEARD ABOUT IT?

DIANNE: Is it on? Yeah, when I travelled over there I was doing a paper in Dunedin, and the people who came along were the people from the ... I think it's South Island, isn't it? South Island, and they spoke to me about a language house that they had, and where they taught the language from the cradle, so the language went on jus ... the Maori language, and because they were Maori and Cook Island and Polynesian and other

places like that, they had a mixture of different languages coming in there, so they needed to keep that and see if it would be of value to their community , so what happened was that a group of families started off, they were the pioneers. Now those kids at that year I was there were just entering into High School, and they had this language and they were really comfortable with it because it was nurtured from preschool right through , and so what happened was, I was thinking well, it's just like Minimbah, when I was first had eight students- eight students in Transition, they were students whose parents were unfamiliar with that transition into the new environment, they were questioning a lot of things, these eight parents; every child was different, they had different things that were wrong with them, like their development checklists showed up differently; some of the ... one parent just kept her child back because she felt that she wasn't ready to let the child go, that kind of thing, so

*Q2: AND THESE CHILDREN, LIKE ALL FROM DIFFERENT ABORIGINAL KIN GROUPS AND TRIBAL GROUPS AS WELL?

DIANNE: Yeah, they were, and so what happened was that, that was my fear; that kind of fear to see that kind of thing changed, because that was a new venture. Then I thought about what Maori people was , older, their elders were telling me; they were saying to me 'Di, it's like this; somebody has to make a stand, and as they make that stand, they need to be able to go along with making changes", and so that's how the Maori cultural/ language nest, language centre started off. Then I started to think about , well only the way that I could seethat would be very helpful to us, because at this time in this community, children who were speaking, they were speaking their own Aboriginal language from their own family group, so there were words they were using different from kids who were coming from Dungutthi languages, and there were some using Bundjalung, and all that. And people just thought it was hard on those children: it wasn't something that could be identified as their own Aboriginal language. So I started thinking about, well, my concept of a nest, meaning that they enclosed in an area where only the thing that is they can see is the light portraying into this circular building and it's an enclosure like a nurturing , I wanted a nurturing environment, and I felt by even children from the cradle, the babies and all those children, would come into this nest, and they would be taught the different kinds of ways of learning language by the bonding, the way the parents were bonding; they would all do it differently and that kind of thing; that's what I was looking; that concept.

*Q3: SO YOU WANTED THE PARENTS IN THERE TOO?

DIANNE: In there too, there was no outside interference because the circular building, the noise sound-the noise wouldn't be affected; but the parents had to be in that area of this; and I started calling- at the time, I wanted to call it a language nest and then literacy came in and we have to move with the jargon within all departments, and so that's what happened.

*Q4: SO IT'S NOW A LITERACY NEST IDEA:

DIANNE: Yeah. A literacy nest is using that same concept but much emphasis is placed on the whole cultural program.

*Q5: SO FROM A LANGUAGE NEST, IT'S BECOME A LITERACY AND CULTURE NEST? YOUR TRANSLATION OF IT FROM THE ORIGINAL NEW ZEALAND IDEA?

DIANNE: Yeah- then

*Q6: WHEN DID YOU GO? TO DUNEDIN? CAN YOU REMEMBER WHAT YEAR THAT WAS?

DIANNE: About three years ago.

*Q7: WAS IT AN EDUCATION CONFERENCE, WAS IT?

DIANNE: Education conference that I spoke at an early childhood -you know the Australian early childhood conference?

*Q8: YEAH

DIANNE: They invited me over to New Zealand to speak over there.

*Q9: AT THE NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD CONFERENCE-OK, WELL WE CAN LOOK IT UP.

DIANNE: Mmm. So it's then I went for a visit all around then, all around New Zealand.

*Q10: AND DID YOU MEET A LOT OF MAORI PEOPLE IN THAT VISIT?

DIANNE: Yeah, the whole of that-we worked it out the trip that I went on was to utilise areas of that language nest, so I went to different places like Christchurch, the University and Dunedin University and that's where Stoddart came from.

*Q11: AND DID YOU MEET ONE OR TWO, OR VERY MANY WOMEN WHO WERE AT THE SAME STAGE OF PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT AS YOURSELF? COMMUNITY LEADERS WHO ARE ALSO

DIANNE: Community leaders, the whole of my session was, I would say 75 people came into my session, half of it was made up of all professional women and men from the different areas of New Zealand.

*Q12: AND CAN YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOU SPOKE ABOUT ON THAT OCCASION?

DIANNE: I spoke about Minimbah's structure, and I spoke about how we can have a program that is relevant to the culture in which we serve, so we have all those different, and I had activities, and I had slides and everything like that to suit that, and from there, then, I was asked to present that over in Albuquerque. It followed on from there.

*Q13: OH, SO THAT CAME FROM THAT PRESENTATION? AND THAT WAS IN 1996, I REMEMBER, BECAUSE I WAS
STANDING IN FOR YOU BACK HOME ... WELL , I WAS SITTING IN THE OFFICE WHILE YOUR STAFF WAS DOING IT ALL.

DIANNE: Then the other thing was, I did the World Indigenous Conference at Wollongong the year after, and then Albuquerque was the year after that. Down at the World Indigenous Conference, all those New Zealand women then came over too, and again, they came into my session, because one of the things that was very disappointing, I think that only and another person was only the two that did early childhood papers.

*Q 14: SO IT WAS PRETTY CONCENTRATED ON SCHOOL EDUCATION AND ADULT EDUCATION?

DIANNE: Oh , it was the whole education- World indigenous.

Q15: WAS THERE MUCH FROM, LIKE, CANADA OR AMERICA?

DIANNE: Yes. A lot. They had- I think it was the largest World Indigenous Conference ever held. Ah, they were supposed to only end up with 3,000- I think they ended up with 5 and a half thousand.

*Q16 AND ONLY TWO PAPERS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD? THAT'S DISAPPOINTING

DIANNE: Early childhood. And I put it up, and I'm just -I just can't recall; but I remember the person who chaired my-er my talk, was, he requested that to be published, so that ...

*Q17 SO THAT WOULD BE IN THE PAPERS? OH, I MIGHT LOOK THAT UP. SO WHEN YOU WENT TO ALBUQUERQUE, YOU
ENT ALL AROUND, YOU MET A LOT OF NATIVE AMERICANS AND NATIVE CANADIANS. WERE THERE IDEAS THERE
THAT YOU PICKED UP?

DIANNE: The whole idea of...even though I had this concept before I left, I wanted to look at how they dealt with the whole community rather than just parts of the community, and holistically, when you look at a community of Indigenous people, what often happens is that if you don't put 'em together, then one is always left out in the dark. There's health problems; there's abuse problems; there's literacy problems, there's all those kinds of things that relate back to health and it relates back to the family environment, and it's all those problems that every family experience, but it's how it's dealt with, and when I got to Canada, the person who I was invited by was Evelyn Eyman; Moore.

*Q18: WAS SHE OVER THERE, THEN, WAS SHE?

DIANNE: Yeah, she's been in the...she was one of the first; she became an eminent just six months before she died.

*Q19: AN EMERITUS PROFESSOR

DIANNE: Yeah, And they given her that, and they asked her to go back from the Indian community- Obima. So I was able to then-I was honoured guest to go along and be a spokesperson within these community schools. Now the son of that school- that lady that Evelyn knew, Theresa Wildcat, well, he is the school inspector for the whole Indigenous schools from all around Canada, Calgary, up around in that area, so what he did, was, he and Teresa and the whole family, just took me on board and taken me all around, and I've seen-within a week, they just gave me a -just drove me to my heart's content into places where I would find interesting the way the things were. Then he came back to where he was Principal of the school -school inspector of, sorry, and I was introduced then to the Principal of this school. That was a Primary school, Preschool and this the Obima community. Now what they was with their land rights money, what they did was set up organisations within there, so if you became and elder, and you was 50 years old when you became an elder and you were supported by a pension from this land money, and then what happened was that they set up supermarkets and banks and mechanical shops and everything- so it was run by the people themselves; the college itself is similar to Tranby and they had all their languages and all that, so I was a guest of honour in there and the people were meeting, they let me speak and honoured that ;went into the school; the Principals there were Indigenous people but they had a lot of non-Aboriginal teachers and within the community and then they had the cultural nest, and that's the cultural nest, an idea that I saw and that was very eye-opening, the elders were-came in and made decisions- no-one else , the elders there were so respected. I was invited to a Sun Dance, and that's their celebration of - you know, their celebration of the grains and seeds from its growing. And then; the school itself was

taught with the cultural program, they had mentor program for kids whose parents were in jail. They had a large jail on the reservation.

*Q20: OH, SO THAT WAS EVEN CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE, IN A WAY.

DIANNE: So the jail, then, the kids had mentors from their own family, so if your son- you was in jail and your son was - would have to have a mentor but he'd have to be a family member from the family kinship - and they walk with them all through the day in school, so you sat with them in school, all that kind of thing because of, when the behaviour got at a too much of an effort, then it stressed out the teacher, and what Charles was saying to me, he said 'Di, this way we're finding that a lot of stress then taken off teachers, where teachers are getting on with their own program and planning.' and then, when they went home, when that child was then dropped back at the-it wasn't a jail, it was a place you had to stay- an enclosure, but the children went back at night to their parents and family, and then that mentor pick 'em up in the morning.

*Q21: OH, THAT'S GREAT, S0 THEY GOT TO SEE THEIR FAMILIES.

DIANNE: Family; they went back inside, yeah.

*Q22: SO DID YOU TAKE ANY OF THOSE IDEAS ON? LAST YEAR YOU RAN THAT PROGRAM FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE
GOING THROUGH SCHOOL-DID YOU TAKE ANY OF THOSE IDEAS WITH YOU TO THAT IDEA?

DIANNE: Yes, I taken those ideas from that concept, because I needed to be able to identify response and even now in Minimbah Primary School, where the parents have to be responsible, they are the ones responsible for their children. Now a lot of parents will feel really very out putting if you start saying 'you are responsible for this child' And if you say that, where in a white structure, what happens in a white situation if you see a child in a terrible situation, the first thing they'll do, they'll ring up DCS. And I know, I've known Directors doing that, and so what I've found, even though we see this child is in these condition, who are we to judge? You know? Because...If I was to ... if that woman had a bad night the night before with her man and she got belted up and had everything wrong with me, then we come along and see those kids in such a bad condition, then if we ring the DCS office, their little lives will be more misery.

*Q23: WELL THE TROUBLE IS, I GUESS, WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, IT SOUNDS LIKE IN CANADA THEY HAD THE SAME
EXPERIENCE AS ABORIGINAL PEOPLE DO HERE

DIANNE: They do.

*Q24: AND THE STOLEN GENERATION WAS REPEATED OVER THERE. IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE ...?

DIANNE: That was what I was experiencing. And see, one of the things, that everything that I was thinking about I could fit it back into my community, but use my community, 'cos I always talk about that - every community is different - we take that concept and we design a program that is suitable for those children we're dealing with , and the community and the families that we're dealing with. So that's what I felt that was very very helpful. Down in the Southern side, when I was in Albuquerque, those Indians - Indigenous people there, have a different way of doing things - they kept everything solely to themself in the community, but up in Obima, they mingle and set up schools but still kept contact with the wider community

*Q25: SO THAT'S BIT CLOSER TO WHAT YOUR BELIEF SYSTEM IS, ISN'T IT?

DIANNE: Yeah. Rather than- 'cos I often hear comments; when you're in a structure where the system operates under that hierarchical system, what usually happens is that the system is the dominating structure: who is the boss at that time. Now if you say we want autonomy to the system, we want to be autonomous but we don't want to obey those rules, then often a lot of non-Indigenous people will say' Well. let 'em swing out there on their own - tough'. But I never ever went down that track, because I always thought if I did that, then I'm losing out on resources that are available for all children in Australia and I need to utilise those resources to be beneficial to this school community, and our parent community and that. If we can't open doors and make that walk - that meeting, the coming together a comfortable meeting, then what we integration what will happen is that we often then get stereotyped into saying 'They do this kind of thing' - we're not going to try to change our ways -' and then that becomes a hindrance rather than support

*Q25: YEAH, YOU'RE KIND OF STUCK IN ONE WAY OF OPERATING

DIANNE: So if we leave that open and say ' we just can't seem to deal with that ' and a couple of things like that came out of it. When I spoke like that to the Indigenous principals and teachers up in Obima, when I was talking like that they said 'Well, Di, that's some of the things that we have experienced' - Yeah - because what was happening, we felt if we went on alone not saying that our people are not educated, that's what a lot of Aboriginal people in Australia thinks, by allowing a lot of non- Indigenous people to come in and take over, then what happens is they have full control - they speak in that way.

Q26: WELL, I HEARD ONE ABORIGINAL ACTIVIST CALL THAT 'WHITEWASHING'- YOU KNOW, WHEN SOMEONE TAKES ON THE VALUES OF THE WHITE COMMUNITY.

DIANNE: Yeah. Well, but I say it differently. I say that the system is there for all people, for all Australian students and parents to utilise that.

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